

Darkness of Fate: The Death of Innocence

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****DARKNESS OF FATE: THE DEATH OF INNOCENCE**

> by Fox "Gaijin" Bautista

****_(Note: This originally started out as the first chapter of a Siegfried-based story, but I wound up writing myself into a corner and decided to release this chapter as a story in itself. The ending, therefore, may come a bit abruptly for some.)**

>**

I still can't help thinking about ... that day.

It's still haunting me, taunting me. I try to shut it out of my mind, but it just comes back, leering at me with that hideous face, that twisted smile, those demonically corrupted eyes...

... Father ... I've never needed you more than I do now.

> Pain ... tears ... carnage. There was still blood on my hands, most of it probably my own.<p>

I closed my eyes and tried to go back to sleep. As I did, that familiar, hateful voice drifted back into my head. I tried desperately to silence it.

It stopped after a while, but then it was replaced by those painful memories.

> Albert Wagner was my first -- and probably my worst -- enemy. I met him during my first day in school, a skinny boy two years older than me with chestnut-brown hair and a permanent smirk.<p>

He was always a rough person. Why he chose to be rough only towards me, however, I'll probably never know.

Why couldn't he pick on the other boys for once?

Why was it always poor old Siegfried Schtauffen?

I actually used to feel sorry for him. He hated reading, and he could hardly write. He struggled with the most basic arithmetic. His father, I'd heard, was a drunkard, and his mother beat him more than she embraced him. I guess that made me, the teacher's favorite and the son of one of Germany's most revered knights, an excellent target.

He merely disliked me at first. Then he started hating me. He'd push me around the school garden, calling me "Sissy Schtauffen." I'd bear it silently ... retaliation would mean a fist in the jaw, or worse if he was in a bad mood.

Then, when I was fourteen, he simply vanished. I didn't bother to ask where he went. The boy who hated me for being myself, my tormentor, was gone ... gone from my life, hopefully forever. I rejoiced. Perhaps life would be less chaotic, now that Albert had disappeared.

I was wrong.

> I gritted my teeth to keep myself from crying. Another twinge of pain, another memory.<p>

> I was fifteen when my father left home on a mission to France. He'd always chosen my friends for me, no matter how embarrassing and utterly ludicrous I thought it was. Now I could choose my friends for myself.<p>

I found myself socializing with a gang of rogues and pickpockets, which didn't seem to bother me at all. It didn't matter to me that what they were doing was wrong; I'd grown up with so many rules. I was sick of rules. These people had none, and I admired them, even envied them for it. In the end, they accepted me into their circle.

We took to each other quite well -- to them, having a knight's son in their group was a real novelty. A few months after I joined them, the leader, Francis, fell ill and died. It came as a disaster for us, his trusted friends.

The yoke of leadership then fell upon me; the decision was unanimous. That was how much the others trusted me. I accepted the responsibility with pride and gave the gang a name: "Schwarzwind," or Black Wind.

Over time, the Schwarzwind grew into an almost unstoppable force. I began to lead a double life as an honorable apprentice knight by day and a ruthless delinquent at night.

When I was sixteen, I hatched what I deemed to be my ultimate plan.

It was supposed to be a way for us to gain some easy money.

> It was a warm summer's night. My plan was simple enough to follow: lie in wait for the cowardly knights retreating from the crusades, then ambush them and run off with their loot. It seemed perfect. Surely the old, battle-weary knights would make easy targets.<p>

The boys and I stood poised behind a storehouse, clutching our weapons. The others carried short knives and crude wooden clubs -- I, being a knight, had the privilege of owning a genuine two-handed sword, a Zweihander, and I hoisted it above my shoulder with pride.

A hoarse mumble ... a rustle. Footsteps, followed by the clanking of armor.

"Get ready, lads!" I whispered.

More footsteps. The sounds grew closer.

"Now!"

Brandishing our weapons, we leaped forth from the shadows and fell upon our prey like a pack of wild hyenas. There were screams. Cries of shock. Absolute chaos. Blood poured freely, mixed with agonized groans and half-hearted war cries. I swung my blade at a balding, withered spear-wielder, knocking away his spear and the arm that held it. He shrieked, and in that moment, something in me changed. I narrowed my eyes, filled with a strange, unfamiliar inner fire.

"Let me put you out of your misery, old man," I hissed.

My victim made no reply. He clutched at his bleeding, limbless stump, staring heavenward and chanting a useless prayer.

I struck.

I felt my sword rip through layers of flesh and sinew, tearing through his ribcage and lodging in the tough bones of his spine. I gave my weapon a twist and jerked it upward slightly. When I pulled it out, the shredded remains of a heart lay impaled at the end of the blade.

Then the realization hit me.

I had killed someone.

And it felt ... good.

A smile creased my lips. Yes, it felt good. Addictively good. Insanely good. I shook the gore off my sword, letting it splatter onto the rocky ground.

The thrill of it was sheer ecstasy.

I had to kill again!

I heard a battle cry from behind me and spun to face my attacker. He rushed towards me with his longsword, then suddenly halted dead in

his tracks and dropped his weapon with trembling fingers. I could see his eyes widen with fear from behind his visor.

"No ... heavens, please have mercy..." I heard him say.

"The heavens cannot help you now!" I shouted, and with those words swung my Zweihander in a wicked arc. A font of crimson spray spurted from where the knight's head used to be. His body went limp and crumpled to the ground.

"He has slain the commander!" I heard someone cry. "We must flee for our lives!"

"That's right, flee!" I crowed triumphantly. "Run, you fools! Run while you still can! I'll hunt you down to the ends of the earth and have your heads for a mantelpiece!"

With that, the few remaining soldiers fled, some dragging wounded and dying bodies with them. I threw my head back and laughed, madly, dementedly, not bothering to care about what I had just wrought.

> The scene was now a grisly diorama. Dead bodies lay scattered across the ground, sprawled at unnatural angles, gaping at the moon with unseeing eyes.<p>

"Have we lost anyone?" I said, dropping the Zweihander back into its sheath.

One of the boys, Rand, approached me. "Cedric took a big scratch in the arm. Kurt wasn't so lucky ... he's been stabbed in the leg. It looks deep. We're taking them to Warren's house."

I nodded. Compared to all the loot that we had just secured for ourselves, an arm and a leg seemed like a small price to pay.

I walked over to the commander's decapitated head and grabbed it by the plume of its helmet, letting it dangle in front of me for all to see. "Look here, lads! Victory shines upon us tonight!"

As a raucous cheer rose up from the boys, I lifted the knight's visor for a glimpse of his face. A stab of moonlight pierced through the clouds and shone upon his frozen features.

Never, never will I forget what I saw...

Staring at me with the most heart-wrenching expression of abject shock and pain was my father!

"Father...?"

I tried to convince myself that this wasn't real...

There was no answer. The great Sir Frederick's head gaped at me blindly. It condemned me ... begged to know why the person who had slain him so cruelly was his own flesh and blood.

"Oh, Father ... please ... don't look at me like that ..."

"Siegfried? Are you all right?"

It was Rand's voice. He was beginning to sound concerned. I ignored him, gazing into lifeless eyes that tore at my very soul.

"_Why?_" they seemed to ask. "_Why, my son? Why have you gone astray?_"

"Don't say that, Father. I'll be fine. Everything will be fine. You'll see..."

"_You have taken the road to destruction, my son._"

"No, Father. Everything's all right."

"_You have done evil._"

"I'm sorry..."

"_You are evil._"

"... I'm so sorry..."

"_YOU KILLED YOUR OWN FATHER._"

"No! NOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

The grief, the horror ... it was too much for me to bear. I dropped my father's bloodied head and ran into the woods, howling like a rabid wolf.

"Father! Father!"

What had I done? My mentor, my friend, my childhood hero, now lay slain by my hand!

The weight of my sin made my heart grow heavy to the point when I thought it would burst. I desperately wished that it would -- so I could escape my wretched existence. I would burn in the fires of Hell ... I knew ... I deserved it. My vision started to blur. I touched my eyes and found them flooded with tears.

Still sobbing, still praying for death yet unable to find the strength to draw my blade and end my miserable life, I ran deeper into the forest. Soon I found myself in a place where the moonlight could not reach ... black as the void that now consumed my spirit.

Rage and turmoil overcame me. I collapsed, letting the cloud of darkness overcome my shattered soul and corrupt every inch of my being.

Sir Frederick Schtauffen had died that night.

Now, so had his killer.

End
file.